

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Reformation Day  
October 31, 2021  
John 8:31-36

### Set Free by the Son

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:34-36 ESV)

Dearly Beloved, As Americans, we love freedom and liberty, don't we? That's why we celebrate Independence Day; and, as Lutherans, that's why we celebrate Reformation Day. Each July, we celebrate our freedom from English rule and oppression. Each October,, indeed, each Lord's Day, we celebrate our freedom from sin, death, hell, and the power of the devil. Yes, we do enjoy freedom.

Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." What wonderful words these are! But the Jews who believed in Him, did not agree because they didn't think they were in bondage and needed to be set free. But they had forgotten their bondage in Egypt, their captivity Assyria and Babylon, and their current situation under Roman rule. Besides, they thought their physical descent from Abraham is what made them children of God.

So, what are you in bondage to? What enslaves you? Debt? Fear of disease, death, something else? Physical passions and lust? Greed? Worry? Addiction to drugs, alcohol, pornography, Facebook (or other social media)? Politics? The ways of the world? What others think of you? Your own self? Face it, we are all enslaved but don't often realize how much.

And lest you think you are not enslaved at all, listen to what Jesus said to those who said they had never been enslaved to anyone, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever." Ouch! "Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." That certainly includes me, and it includes each one of you. We can't get around those haunting words. We are slaves of sin. There is no denying it, though we often try to do just that. We may claim that our sin is not sin, or that it's natural, or that that's how God made us, or we appeal to something good within ourselves, "I'm kind and generous. I try to help everyone I can." We compare ourselves to others, "I'm not as bad as they are." Like the rich, young man, we may even think that we have kept the commandments. Yet, it's all for naught. We are enslaved to sin and "the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), separation from life - forever.

Like the Jews in our Lord's day, we too may rely on family relationships, even church membership, as though it's something to hang our eternal destiny on. As Jesus so clearly

pointed out to the Jews, physical descent from Abraham meant nothing. It did not make you a true child of God. The same is true for us. Being from a particular family, having your name on the church rolls, even doing lots of good things for others or the church, does not mean anything as far as salvation and eternal life are concerned. No, there's only one way out of our slavery and bondage.

So, what to do? How can we be free of sin's tyranny? Listen to Jesus. Abide in His Word. That Word which tells us that we are slaves to sin because we sin. His Word which tells us that we deserve to go to hell because of our sin. But also, and especially, His Word which says, "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." This is what Jesus wants you to know and understand and believe with all your heart. This is what He wants you to hang your hope for salvation, freedom from sin, and eternal life on. In Jesus, you have been set free. In Jesus, you are no longer a slave to sin, but you have been made sons of God, brothers of Christ Jesus, heirs of eternal life.

In Christ, God has taken you beggars and declared you kings. The Emperor of Heaven, "God who is enthroned forever" (Psalm 55:19), reduced Himself to a pauper's life and a beggar's existence so that you may be seated upon the thrones of heaven (Revelation 20:4). The Mighty God, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), allowed Himself to be enchained in your sins. He took upon Himself the yoke of your slavery and carried it in your place. He voluntarily sold Himself into bondage for your freedom and by the price of His own blood, His own life, He has set you free. "It is for freedom that Christ has set you free" (Galatians 5:1) and "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

This is the Gospel, dear friends. This is justification. It's all about Christ. His person. His work. His life. His death. His resurrection. His preaching. His teaching. His Baptizing. His Absolution. His Body and Blood in His Supper.

And this is what the Reformation was, and is, all about. This is what true Lutheranism is all about. It's about abiding in the words of Jesus and living in the freedom He gives. True Lutheranism is about nothing other than Jesus Christ, "The Way, the Truth, and the Life." He is the one who sets you free, and He is the one who gives you your identity as a child of God. Therefore, you are free indeed. Free from sin. Free from the power of the devil. Free from God's wrath. Free from fear. Free from reliance on anything you do. Free to live as a child of God. Free to love and serve your neighbor.

"Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves of sin . . . you have been set free from sin" (Rom 6:17-18) by the Son. And because He has set you free, you are free indeed, and by the grace of God you "will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6). Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener